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ABSTRACT

This handbook provides a guide to assist African American parents of children with learning disabilities to become advocates for their children and raise awareness about learning differences. An introductory section notes the disproportionate risk of African American boys for being labeled mentally retarded and placed in special education. The guide then goes on to explain what a learning disability is, types of learning disability, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, accessing special education services (including the benefits of evaluation and the Individualized Education Program), rights and responsibilities under the law, common reasons for referral to special education, grade repetition, and private schools. Additional issues briefly addressed include attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, lead poisoning, communication, and differences versus disorders. The guide concludes with specific ways parents can help their children achieve school success and make their voice heard. A resource directory lists resources on assessment and testing, legal services, schools serving children with learning disabilities (by state), summer camps, colleges and universities with programs and services, information about scholarships and financial assistance, and some national organizations. (DB)

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One Child at a Time

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A Parent Handbook and Resource Directory for African American Families with Children Who Learn Differently

EC 309239

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Acknowledgements

Schwab Learning

The National Association for the Education of African American Children with Learning Disabilities (NAEAACLD) extends its sincere gratitude and appreciation to Schwab Learning for underwriting support of this parent handbook and resource directory.[1]

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Elsie Blount, Chair
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[1] The contents of this publication do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of Schwab Learning and should not assume endorsement.

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"Like the metamorphosis of a butterfly . . .
change begins with a new way of learning."

About the NAEAACLD

The National Association for the Education of African American Children with Learning Disabilities (NAEAACLD) was founded in 2000 to increase awareness and promote an understanding of the specific issues facing African American children with learning disabilities. It is governed by a board of trustees, which brings expertise in advocacy, special education and research, public policy and law, psychology, corporate involvement, fund development, public relations, and practical experience.

The NAEAACLD is advised by representatives of 14 other national organizations who bring extensive knowledge in special education, resource and training opportunities, a focus on the needs of African American children, access to valuable research information, and the ability to reach the targeted audience. The NAEAACLD is building strategic alliances with these and other organizations, including the Families and Advocates Partnership for Education and the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities.

For more information, contact the NAEAACLD at P.O. Box 09521, Columbus, Ohio 43209, Telephone (614) 237-6021 or visit our Web site at http://www.aacld.org.

A Message to African American Parents

Although the input of teachers, principals, and school psychologists is important in the identification and placement of children in special education, parents cannot allow these decisions to depend solely on the opinions of school personnel. Parents *must* be aggressive and actively seek information about their legal rights and responsibilities provided under Federal and State law. They *must* learn to understand their child's educational needs and then become that child's strongest advocate.

Many minority children have been misdiagnosed and inappropriately placed in special education but the reality is that the current legal process must be used to obtain the appropriate services and supports that every child is entitled and needs for school and later life success. *Parents should not resist evaluations for a child who is struggling but they should be vigilant, making sure that the findings are accurate and that the interventions rendered result in continuous academic and social progress.*

Parents can become involved in the special needs decision-making process for their child by learning about the Federal law that guarantees a "free appropriate public education" for all children—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Although there are widespread reports of noncompliance by the majority of states, this law clearly defines parents' rights and responsibilities (see page 2). Knowledge of the law will help parents to force compliance and access the services their child needs.

It is also important for parents to become familiar with their State special education law. There are minimum requirements that States must meet in order to receive Federal funds to assist in providing special education and related services but the specifics of each State law may vary. Contact your State Department of Education, Office of Special Education for a parent brochure.

The purpose of this handbook and resource guide is to empower African American parents to become advocates for their children and to improve the quality of education for all children by raising the level of awareness about learning differences. Parents can change the course of education in this country . . . one child at a time.

This handbook is dedicated to children everywhere with differences and dreams. It is written as an encouragement to parents to believe in their child's ability to learn and to help the child find that dreams can come true. It is also dedicated to my children who have somehow defied all odds in a world that has not been tolerant of difference to grow and become extraordinary young adults.

Nancy R. Tidwell
Founder & President
NAEAACLD

Introduction

Since the 1960's, overrepresentation of African American children in special education has received national attention but little has been done to correct the mislabeling that has occurred. Statistics from the U.S. Department of Education for 1998-99 show that African Americans represented 18.3% of students placed in the special education category of specific learning disability, 26.4% in the category of serious emotional disturbance, and 34.3% in the category of mild retardation.

According to a series of national studies released in 2001 by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, "school districts nationwide continue to improperly and disproportionately place minority students in special education classes despite an increase in civil rights protections and special education services over the past 25 years." The report also stated, "When compared with their white counterparts, African American children were almost three time more likely to be labeled 'mentally retarded'."

While factors associated with poverty are often identified as the primary reason for the overrepresentation of minorities in special education, this common overgeneralization is refuted by findings that *as factors associated with wealth and better schooling increase, African American boys are at greater risk* of being disproportionately labeled "mentally retarded" (Oswald, Coutinho and Best). Other reports such as, *Rethinking Special Education for a New Century* released by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in 2001, acknowledge "race plays a powerful role in the placement of children in special education."

Mislabeling is a common denial of educational opportunity and it requires the immediate attention of African American parents nationwide. However, it should be emphasized that the NAEAACLD is *not* advocating for the end of special education for African American students with learning disabilities or any other disability. The fact remains that *some* African American children *do* have learning disabilities regardless of whether or not they have been identified or how they have been categorized. High quality special education services must be available to these children.

We believe that overemphasis on what is wrong with a child without considering all that is happening around the child (e.g., poor instruction, low teacher expectations, family problems) has resulted in biased assessment and placement practices. What we advocate for is fair treatment in the assessment and placement process and for implementation of effective and appropriate instructional practices for our children prior to and after a placement in special education. We believe the focus on these issues will eventually decrease the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education.

This handbook provides a guide to assist parents of children with learning disabilities to reach their fullest potential by exercising their rights and accessing services to which they are entitled by law.

What is a Learning Disability?

Does your child reverse letters when reading or writing words?

Do you wonder how he understands advanced subjects, but he cannot do a simple math problem?

Do you wonder if she will ever learn the days of the week or understand how to tell time?

Is your child easily distracted?

Does he have difficulty interacting with peers?

Does she have difficulty following directions?

Is your child an under performing student who is beginning to show behavioral problems?

Is your child trying but just doesn't seem to learn?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines a learning disability as a "disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations."[2] The Federal definition further states that learning disabilities include "such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia."[3] State definitions of learning disabilities vary.

According to some experts, fifteen percent of the population in the United States has some type of learning disability. These differences do not go away and yet are often misidentified or undetected because they cannot be seen. Given appropriate and individualized instruction, children with learning disabilities can be successful in school and lead outstanding careers. Even people renown for their abilities are said to have faced this challenge. A few examples are Harry Belafonte, Prince Charles, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Danny Glover, Whoopie Goldberg, James Earl Jones, Michael Jordan, John F. Kennedy, and Stevie Wonder.

Types of Learning Disabilities

Students who have learning disabilities may exhibit a wide range of traits, including problems with reading comprehension, spoken language, writing, or reasoning ability. Hyperactivity, inattention, and perceptual coordination problems may also be associated with learning disabilities. Other traits that may be present include a variety of symptoms, such as uneven and unpredictable test performance, perceptual impairments, motor disorders, and behaviors such as impulsiveness, low tolerance for frustration, and problems in handling day-to-day social interactions and situations.[4]

Learning disabilities may occur in the following academic areas:[5]

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[2] Source: National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

[3] According to the law, learning disabilities do not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; mental retardation; or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. Source: National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

[4] Source: *Learning Disabilities* Fact Sheet, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities

[5] Source: *Ibid.*

- Spoken Language: Delays, disorders, or discrepancies in listening and speaking;
- Written Language: Difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling;
- Arithmetic: Difficulty in performing arithmetic functions or in comprehending basic concepts;
- Reasoning: Difficulty in organizing and integrating thoughts; and
- Organization Skills: Difficulty in organizing all facets of learning.

Subtypes for learning disabilities include: dyslexia, (language), dyscalculia (mathematical), dysgraphia (writing), and dyspraxia (motor planning). In addition, auditory and visual processing disabilities present difficulties understanding language despite normal hearing and vision. Attention Deficit/Hyperacivity Disorder (AD/HD) may occur with learning disabilities. Any of these problems may mildly, moderately, or severely impair the learning process.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The federal law that supports special education and related service programming for children and youth with disabilities is called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It entitles all eligible school-aged children and youth with disabilities to receive a "free appropriate public education."

The IDEA, originally the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, is one of the most important civil rights laws ever written. It was enacted over 25 years ago and has been amended several times. Unfortunately, there are reports of widespread noncompliance by the majority of states. Recommendations have been made to the President and Congress urging full implementation and enforcement of the law but the wheels of progress move slowly. In the meantime, parents must become strong advocates for their children in order to obtain the appropriate services and supports they are entitled.

The eligibility category of a "specific learning disability" is one of the 13 listings under the IDEA for children who need special education and related services.[6] Many schools are ill equipped to teach children who learn differently. Teachers are often misinformed or sent mixed messages regarding compliance with the law. In fact, a nationwide poll[7] conducted in recent years indicates that four out of five teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach students with special needs. This means that families of children with learning disabilities must educate themselves about learning differences.

Congress reviews the IDEA every five years. The next reauthorization is scheduled for 2002 as this booklet goes to print. The issue of overrepresentation of African American children in special education and many others will be addressed during the process. It is important that the voices of African American families are heard in this

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[6] Other categories of special education needs and related services under the IDEA include: mental retardation; a hearing impairment, including deafness; a speech or language impairment; a visual impairment, including blindness; serious emotional disturbance; an orthopedic impairment; autism; traumatic brain injury; other health impairment; deaf-blindness; or multiple disabilities.

[7] *NCLD News*, National Center for Learning Disabilities, Summer 2000, Volume 10, Number 2.

reauthorization process and those to follow. For this reason, the NAEAACLD has established a Parent Network for disseminating and gathering information for educational purposes. You can join by simply contacting us at P.O. Box 09521, Columbus, Ohio 43209, Telephone (614) 237-6021 or visit our Web site at http://www.aacld.org.

You can obtain a copy of the IDEA and its regulations on the Internet at the Web site of the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA/index.html. Detailed information about the IDEA and other topics can be obtained in NICHCY (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities) publications available free of charge on the Internet at www.nichcy.org. To receive a *Publications Catalog*, write NICHCY at P.O. Box 1492, Washington, D.C. 20013 or call (800) 695-0285.

Accessing Special Education Services[8]

Before a child with a disability can receive special education and related services for the first time, a full and individual initial evaluation of the child, must be conducted. Informed parent consent is required before this evaluation may be conducted. There are at least two ways in which your child may be selected to receive an evaluation:

1. **You may request that your child be evaluated**. You can call or write to your child's teacher, the principal of your child's school, or the director of special education in your school district. If the public agency suspects that your child has a disability, your child must be evaluated at no cost to you. If the public agency refuses to evaluate your child because it does not believe that that your child has a disability, you must be given a written notice of refusal and a full explanation of the reasons for the refusal. Under IDEA you do have the right to request mediation or challenge the public agency's refusal through a due process hearing.

2. **The public agency may ask to evaluate your child**. Based on a teacher's recommendation, or observations or results from tests given to all children in a particular grade, a public agency may recommend that a child receive further screening or assessment (at no cost to you) to determine if he or she has a disability and needs special education and related services. You, as a parent must give informed written permission before the public agency can evaluate your child. If you refuse, the public agency may continue to pursue the evaluation by using due process or mediation procedures, unless doing so is inconsistent with State law.

The evaluation process begins when a group of individuals, including you as parents, reviews existing evaluation data on your child and decides if any additional data are needed to determine if your child has a disability and to help plan instruction. The public agency will collect whatever information is needed (with your consent), following guidelines for sound evaluation and using a variety of evaluation methods and strategies, including tests, observations, and classroom-based assessments. An evaluation report will then

[8] Source: *Questions and Answers about IDEA*, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

be prepared. Such a report generally would summarize the results of your child's evaluation.

Upon completing the administration of tests and other evaluation materials, a group of qualified professionals and you, the parents, must determine whether or not your child is a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA and local policy, and whether your child needs special education and related services. This determination will be made based on the results of your child's evaluation and information from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, parent input, teacher recommendations, and your child's physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior.

The regulations state that a team may determine that a child has a specific learning disability if two conditions are met:

1. The first is that the child does not achieve commensurate with his or her age and ability levels in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, or mathematic reasoning, even if the child is provided with learning experiences appropriate for his or her age and ability level.

2. The second condition is that the team finds that a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of those areas. If the evaluation results indicate that your child meets the definition of one or more of the disabilities listed under IDEA and needs special education and related services, the results will form the basis for developing your child's Individualized Education Program (see page 5).

If you, as parents of a child with a disability, disagree with the results of your child's evaluation as obtained by the public agency, you have the right to obtain an independent evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not responsible for the education of your child. If you ask for an independent evaluation, the public agency must provide you with information about where it can be obtained. An independent evaluation must meet the same criteria that the public agency uses when it initiates an evaluation in order to be considered in any decision made with respect to your child's education.

The public agency may grant your request and pay for an independent evaluation or it may initiate a hearing to show that its own evaluation was appropriate. You are not required to explain your objection to the public evaluation. If the public agency initiates a hearing and the final decision of the hearing officer is that the agency's evaluation was appropriate, then you still have the right to an independent evaluation but not at public expense. Of course, you have the right to have your child independently evaluated (using the same criteria) at any time at your own expense for additional consideration.

Evaluations must be conducted at least every three years after your child has been placed in special education. Reevaluations can also occur more frequently if conditions warrant, or if you or your child's teacher makes such a request. Informed parental consent is also necessary for reevaluations.

Benefits of Evaluation

The benefits of evaluation far outweigh the consequences of not having a child tested for fear of mislabeling. The struggling learner is guaranteed for failure without an evaluation. To avoid the chances of mislabeling, parents must make sure that the evaluation findings are accurate and that the interventions rendered result in continuous academic and social progress. An accurate evaluation will determine the nature and extent of the disability so that an appropriate individualized education program can be developed.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)[9]

An IEP is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with certain requirements of the law. General purposes of the IEP are to establish measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, for the child and to state the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services that the public agency will provide to, or on behalf of, the child.

The IEP is developed by a team whose members meet, review the assessment information available about your child, and design an educational program to address your child's educational needs that result from his or her disability. This meeting must be held within 30 calendar days after it is determined, through a full and individual evaluation that your child has one of the disabilities listed in IDEA and needs special education and related services.

According to the regulations, the IEP team for each child with a disability includes the following individuals: one or both of the child's parents; at least one regular education teacher of the child, at least one special education teacher of the child; a representative of the public agency; an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results; and, other individuals, at the discretion of the agency or the parents. The child may also attend, if appropriate.

Sometimes parents find it difficult to express their feelings when they are sitting alone with a team of experts who might tend to dictate the content, tone, and outcome of the IEP meeting. It is wise for parents to take with them a trained LD advocate or another individual who knows their child. This person can help prompt your thinking as a parent about what is being presented.

Once you and the other members of the IEP team have looked closely at and discussed your child's educational needs, decided what special education and related services are appropriate for your child, and specified the other information required in the IEP, it will be time to consider where your child will receive these services. The placement decision must be made in conformity with the law's least restrictive environment provisions.

For more information on the IEP, obtain a copy of *Questions and Answers About the IDEA* from the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities free of charge on the Internet at www.nichcy.org or call (800) 695-0285.

[9] Source: *Questions and Answers about IDEA*, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

Your Rights and Responsibilities Under the Law

The regulations implementing IDEA include an entire section entitled "Procedural Safeguards." These safeguards are designed to protect the rights of parents and their child with a disability, as well as to give families and public agencies a mechanism for resolving disputes. Some of IDEA's procedural safeguards[10] are listed below:

- the right of parents to inspect and review their child's educational records
- the right of parents to obtain an independent educational evaluation
- the right of parents to be given written prior notice on matters regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of their child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education to their child
- the right of parents or public agencies to request mediation and an impartial due process hearing on these matters
- the right of parents to be given a full explanation of all of the procedural safeguards available under IDEA and the State complaint procedures
- the right of parents or public agencies to appeal the initial hearing decision to the State Education Agency (SEA) if the SEA did not conduct the hearing
- the right of the child to remain in his or her present educational placement, unless the parent and the public agency agree otherwise, while administrative or judicial proceedings are pending
- the right of parents or public agencies to bring a civil action in an appropriate State or Federal court to appeal a final hearing decision
- the right of parents to request reasonable attorney's fees from a court for actions or proceedings brought under the IDEA under the certain circumstances
- the right of parents to give or refuse consent before their child is evaluated or reevaluated
- the right of parents to give or refuse consent before their child is provided with special education and related services for the first time

Your responsibilities are to know and understand the law and its procedures for accessing a "free appropriate public education" for your child.

[10] Source: *Questions and Answers About IDEA*, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

Common Reasons for Referral to Special Education

According to *Minority Students in Special and Gifted Education*, a report issued in January 2002 by the National Research Council, reading difficulties and behavior problems are two of the most common reasons that students are singled out for special education. Parents should be aware of the following information gathered from a variety of sources:

Reading Difficulties

Millions of people in the United States have trouble reading. Some may not be able to read at all, while others have basic reading skills but might be considered "slow readers." It is useful to know that problems with reading are often accompanied by problems with writing, listening, or speaking. There are many reasons why a person might have difficulty in developing reading skills. Reading difficulties can be the result of poor instruction, particularly when it occurs across multiple years.

Learning to read begins far before children enter formal schooling. Early reading skills are fostered when children are read to at home during the preschool years. Very young children who are provided opportunities to learn, think, and talk about new areas of knowledge will gain much from the reading process. Even so, many children with strong oral language experience, average to above average intelligence, and frequent early interactions with literacy activities also have difficulties learning to read.

One of the most common reasons for reading difficulty is the presence of a learning disability. Among children with learning disabilities, 80 percent have reading problems. The National Center for Learning Disabilities in partnership with the Learning Network has launched "Get Ready to Read!," an easy-to-use, 20 question screening tool for parents and child care providers to identify young children's readiness to read. It can be easily accessed and administered online at http:learningnetwork.com/read.

Also, The Partnership for Reading, a collaborative effort of the National Institute for Literacy, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the U.S. Department of Education have published a brochure entitled *Putting Reading First* which describes what a quality reading program should look like at school and how you can support that program through activities with your children.

You can obtain a copy of the *Putting Reading First* brochure by contacting the National Institute for Literacy at ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, Maryland 20794-1398 or 1-800-228-8813. You can also request a copy by E-mail at edpuborders@edpubs.org or download the document at www.nifl.gov.

Behavioral Problems

Children whose educational needs are not being met often experience lives of frustration, confusion, and unwarranted failure. Many reach a point of being dysfunctional in a traditional classroom or special education program. They are often angry at the system, for it seems they fail no matter how hard they try. Some give up and stop working. Research reported in a 1999 issue of *The Journal of Special* Education indicates that the dropout rate is 68% higher for minority children than for whites—more than 50 percent of minority students in large cities drop out of school.

Without appropriate educational intervention, the prospects are very slim for children with learning disabilities successfully completing school and living fulfilling lives as productive citizens. The bitter irony is that despite the inability of these children to perform well in conventional school programs, they are typically neither lazy nor unintelligent. In fact, they are often quite bright, gifted with unique talents, and very eager to learn. The problem is not that they are unable to learn traditional school and social skills, but that they cannot learn them in a traditional way.

Other failing students act out their feelings and become behavioral problems building defenses that only get them in trouble. The challenge of educating these children is further exasperated with the advent of "zero tolerance" policies where recent statistics indicate that black students are suspended or expelled up to five times more than whites even though research dispels a simplistic explanation of a disproportionate level of misbehavior by minority students and points to a biased system where double standards appear to exist.

The 1997 revision of the IDEA added explicit language regarding the disciplining of students with disabilities. These provisions were intended to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents, while at the same time address the concerns of school administrators and teachers regarding school safety and order. They were also intended to help schools respond appropriately to a child's behavior and promote the use of appropriate behavioral interventions to prevent troubling behavior from reoccurring.

You can contact the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) directly at 1-800-695-0285 or by E-mail at nichcy@aed.org for more information about the law and positive behavioral supports.

Should Your Child Repeat A Grade?

The practice of retaining children in any grade has been shown through many years of research to be ineffective in meeting the needs of children who are behind academically. Despite this evidence, the rate of retention has increased significantly over the last twenty years. Furthermore, the highest retention rates are found among poor, minority inner city youth.

Given the frequent use of this ineffective practice, schools and parents are urged to seek alternatives to retention that are more beneficial to children and address more effectively the specific instructional needs of academic underachievers. [11]

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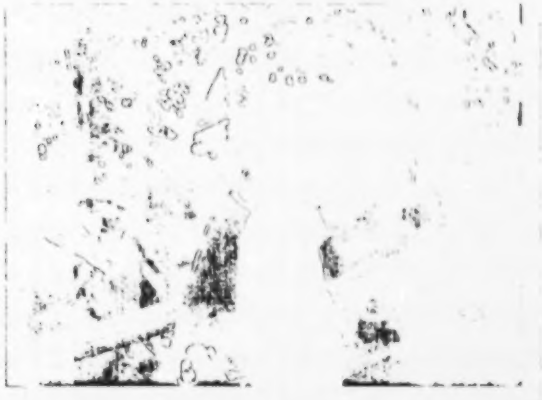
[11] Source: National Association of School Psychologists Position Statement: Student Grade Retention and Social Promotion, June 1998.



What About A Private School Education?

The law does not require a local education agency to pay for the cost of education, including special education and related services, of a child at a private school or facility if that agency made a "free appropriate public education" available to the child and the parents chose to place the child in the private school or facility.

However, if a court or hearing officer finds that the public agency did not make "a free appropriate public education" available to your child and that a private school placement is appropriate as well as certain other conditions met, you may be able to secure reimbursement for the cost of your child's private school enrollment.

Cases of public agency reimbursement for the cost of private school enrollment for children with learning disabilities are scarce. Many parents have found it difficult to prove that the services offered by the public agency are not appropriate. However, many private schools for children with learning disabilities offer financial aid.

The resource directory of this handbook includes a partial listing of private schools serving children and young adults with learning disabilities. There is also a listing of contacts for scholarship and financial assistance available for elementary and secondary education as well as for those students in pursuit of a college education.

Other Issues of Concern

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is a condition that can make it hard for a person to sit still, control behavior, and pay attention. Doctors do not know just what causes AD/HD but researchers believe that some people with AD/HD do not have enough of certain chemicals (called *neurotransmitters*) in their brain. These chemicals help the brain control behavior. As many as 5 out of every 100 children in school may have AD/HD. Boys are three times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with the condition.

When a child shows signs of AD/HD, he or she needs to be evaluated by a trained professional. It is also important to rule out other reasons for the child's behavior and find out if the child has other disabilities along with AD/HD. Many students with AD/HD qualify for special education services under the "Other Health Impairment" category within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).[12] They may also be eligible for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.[13]

Lead Poisoning[14]

The implications of lead poisoning are vast, as the neurological damage it causes can lead to learning disabilities and emotional disturbances. Parents of preschool children who live in older, deteriorating neighborhoods should obtain information from their local health department about the need to have their children screened periodically and how to protect them from lead-infested environments.

Communication Differences vs. Disorders[15]

African American English (AAE) has been the subject of great debate over the past several decades. There is a potential for speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and other educators to reach inappropriate conclusions about the abilities of children from diverse backgrounds if they do not understand issues related to normal cultural and linguistic variation. An individual competent in the student's "home" language should be a part of the assessment team.

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[12] IDEA defines "other health impairment" as ". . . having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia; and adversely affects a child's educational performance."

[13] Source: *Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder* Fact Sheet, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

[14] Source: *The Epidemiology of Urban Childhood Lead Poisoning by Wornie L. Reed, Ph.D., Director, The Urban Child Research Center at Cleveland State University.*

[15] Source: *Communication Sciences and Disorders, Chapter 3: The Social and Cultural Bases of Communication*, Elizabeth D. Pena and Janice E. Jackson.

Parent Education and Advocacy: What You Can Do

You are your child's most important teacher, mentor, and advocate. Your child's school success will be enhanced considerably if:

1. During ages 3 to 5 your child has access to a high quality preschool education—either Head Start, if eligible, or a private preschool.

2. You and/or other responsible adults read to your child for at least 30 minutes each day. These readings should begin at infancy and continue at least through the primary grades (third grade) or longer.

3. Your child is able to identify all the letters of the alphabet when he/she enters kindergarten. There is research evidence that children who are able to name their letters when they start Kindergarten make much better progress in school (Chard, Simmons, Kame'enui).

4. You meet with your child's teacher at least every six weeks throughout the school year (more often if your child is experiencing academic or behavior problems).

   At each meeting, you should find out

   - what are the academic (reading and math) goals for the next grading period.
   - the progress your child is making toward accomplishing these goals, and,
   - what you and the school can do to make sure these goals are attained.

5. You make sure your child is making steady progress commensurate with that of his/her grade placement. With your child's teacher, carefully review grade level or IEP goals and closely monitor your child's progress. If he/she is not making progress, you should meet with teachers to talk about things that work at home and at school. Try to come up with more systematic approaches that can be used in both settings.

Parents have long been a guiding force in bringing about and implementing special education programs. Although African American children are disproportionately placed in special education, the voices of African American parents have been noticeably absent. The overall poor school performance of African American learners points to the tremendous need for parental advocacy. You can make your voice heard by:

1. Becoming involved in parent advocacy organizations such as the NAEAACLD.

2. Becoming involved in other national organizations (as appropriate) such as those listed in this handbook and resource directory.

3. Creating local parent organizations in your communities to help identify specific local concerns.

4. Educating yourself on special education laws (IDEA) and local regulations.

5. Studying and monitoring your local school district relative to special education practices, particularly as they pertain to African American learners.

6. Raising questions with local and national school authorities through advocacy groups regarding your concerns.

Resource Directory

(This resource directory is continually being updated with new information. The listing is not considered an endorsement of services but rather a source for parent review.)

Assessment and Testing

The NAEAACLD is currently working in collaboration with the Association of Black Psychologists to develop a database of professionals throughout the country who do educational testing. Please contact us for specific names in your area.

Legal Services

The NAEAACLD is currently developing a database of African American attorneys throughout the country who provide legal assistance to parents in pursuing their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Schools Serving Children with Learning Disabilities

Elementary and Secondary Education

See *What About a Private School Education?* on page 9 of the handbook and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) reference in the resource directory for information on accessibility and affordability of these schools:

Alabama: Three Springs, Inc. (Huntsville)

Alaska: Eagle Crest Academy (Anchorage)

Arizona: New Way School (Scottsdale)

California: Charles Armstrong (Belmont); Chartwell School (Seaside); Lincoln Child Center (Oakland); Summit View School (North Hollywood); Westmark School (Encino)

Colorado: Havern Center, Inc. (Littleton)

Connecticut: Eagle Hill (Southport); Oxford Academy (Westbrook)

Delaware: Centreville School (Centreville)

District of Columbia: The Lab School of Washington

Florida: The Vanguard School (Lake Wales)

Georgia: Gables Academy (Stone Mountain); Mills Springs Academy (Alpharetta); The Schenk School (Atlanta)

Hawaii: Assets School (Honolulu)

Idaho: Boulder Creek Academy (Bonners Ferry)

Illinois: Brehm Preparatory School (Carbondale); The Cove School (Northbrook)

Indiana: Worthmore Academy (Indianapolis)

Kentucky: The Shedd Academy (Mayfield)

Louisiana: Gables Academy (Baton Rouge)

Maryland: Chelsea School (Silver Spring); New Dominion School (Oldtown); The McLean School of Maryland (Potomac); The Odyssey School (Baltimore); The Summit School (Edgewater)

Massachusetts: Academy at Swift River (Cummington); Eagle Hill School (Hardwick); Hillside School (Marlborough); Landmark

School (Prides Crossing); Linden Hill School (Northfield)

Michigan: Eton Academy (Birmingham)

Minnesota: Calvin Academy (Moundsview); Hebron Academy (Hebron)

Missouri: Metropolitan School (St. Louis); The Miriam School (Webster Groves)

Nebraska: Epworth Village, Inc. (York)

New Hampshire: The Hunter School (Rumney)

New Mexico: Brush Ranch School (Tererro)

New York: Maplebrook School (Amenia); The Churchill School (New York City); The Gow School (South Wales); The Kildonan School (Amenia); The New York Institute for Special Education (Bronx)

North Carolina: Dore Academy (Charlotte)

Ohio: Lawrence School (Broadview Heights); Marburn Academy (Columbus); The Springer School (Cincinnati)

Oklahoma: Town & Country School (Tulsa)

Oregon: Children's Program (Portland)

Pennsylvania: Delaware Valley Friends School (Bryn Mawr); Pathway School (Norristown); The Phelps School (Malvern)

Rhode Island: The Hamilton School (Providence)

South Carolina: Sandhills Academy (Columbia); Trident Academy (Mt. Pleasant)

Tennessee: Scenic Land School (Chattanooga); Westminister School of Nashville (Nashville)

Texas: The Briarwood School (Houston)

Vermont: Pine Ridge School (Williston); The Greenwood School (Putney)

Virginia: Oakland School (Keswick); Oakwood School (Annandale); Riverside School (Richmond)

Washington: Hamlin Robinson School (Seattle)

Summer Camps

Many of the elementary and secondary schools listed in this directory provide summer programs. In addition, a directory of summer camps for children with learning disabilities is available at a minimal cost from:

Learning Disabilities Association of America
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
Telephone: (888) 300-6710.
E-mail: ldanatl@usaor.net
Web:
http://ldaamerica.org/store/LD_Directories.html.

Colleges and Universities with Programs and Services

Numerous state colleges and universities provide programs and services for students with learning disabilities. Listed below are just a few schools (public and private) that advertise these services:

Beacon College
Office of Admissions
105 East Main Street
Leesburg, Florida 34748
(351) 787-7660
Web: www.beaconcollege.edu

Landmark College
River Road South
Putney Vermont 05346-9446
(802) 387-6718
E-mail: admissions@landmarkcollege.org
Web: www.landmarkcollege.org

Lynn University
3601 North Military Trail
Boca Raton, Florida 33431-5598
(800) 888-LYNN
E-Mail: admission@lynn.edu
Web: www.lynn.edu

The University of Arizona
Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques (SALT) Center
P.O. Box 210021 Old Main 101
Tucson, Arizona 85721-0021
(520) 621-8493
Web: www.salt.Arizona.edu

Also, check your local library for copies of *Peterson's Colleges with Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorder* and *The Princeton Review K & W Guide to Colleges for the Learning Disabled* as well as other resources.

Sources of Information about Scholarships & Financial Assistance

Anne Ford Scholarship
National Center for Learning Disabilities
381 Park Avenue, South, Suite 1401
New York, New York 10016
(212) 545-7510

California Association on Postsecondary Education and Disability Student Scholarships (Janet Shapiro)
Disabled Student Programs and Services
Santa Barbara City College
721 Cliff Drive
Santa Barbara, California 93109
(805) 965-0581, Ext. 2365

Commonweal Foundation (Mary Plumley)
Learning Disabilities Support Program
10770 Columbia Pike, Suite 100
Silver Spring, Maryland 20901
(301) 592-1316

Federal Student Aid Information Center
P.O. Box 84
Washington, D.C. 20044
(800) 433-3243

HEATH Resource Center
One Dupont Circle, Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20036
(800) 544-3284

Marion Huber Learning Through Listening Award - Public Affairs Office
Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic
20 Roszel Road
Princeton, New Jersey 08540
(800) 221-4792

National Association of Independent Schools
1620 L Street, NW Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20036-5695
(202) 973-9700
Web Address: www.nais.org
(The NAIS provides detailed information on financing a private education, including tuition payment plans and loan programs, need-based financial aid, and scholarship providers.)

Social Security Administration
6402 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21235
(800) 772-1213

Stanley E. Jackson Scholarship Awards
Foundation for Exceptional Children
1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

The Foundation Center
79 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10003
(800) 424-9836

Other Organizations to Contact

The following is a list of other organizations to contact for more information about learning disabilities and related issues:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, Maryland 20852
Telephone: (301) 897-5700 or
(800) 638-8255
Web Address: www.asha.org (Home Page) or www.professional.asha.org/resources/multicultural (Multicultural Affairs)

Children & Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
8181 Professional Place, Suite 201
Landover, Maryland 20785
Telephone: (301) 306-7070 or
(800) 233-4050
Web Address: www.chadd.org

Council for Learning Disabilities
P.O. Box 40303
Overland Park, Kansas 66204
Telephone: (913) 492-8755
Web Address: www.cld.international.org

Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) - The Council for Exceptional Children
1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201-5704
Telephone: (703) 620-3660 or
(888) 232-7733
Web Address: www.TeachingLD.org

Hello Friend
Ennis William Cosby Foundation
P.O. Box 4061
Santa Monica, California 90411
Web Address: www.hellofriend.org

International Dyslexia Association (IDA)
8600 LaSalle Road
Chester Building # 382
Baltimore, Maryland 21286-2044
Telephone: (410) 296-0232 or (800) ABCD123
Web Address: www.interdys.org

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15234-1349
Telephone: (412) 341-1515
Web Address: www.LDAAmerica.org

National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing (NBASLH)
P.O. Box 50605
Washington, D.C. 20091-0605
Telephone: (202) 274-6162
Web Address: www.nbaslh.org

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)
381 Park Avenue, South
Suite 1401
New York, New York 10016
Telephone: (212) 545-7510
Web Address: www.LD.org and
www.getreadytoread.org and
www.livingwithld.org

National Commission for African-American Education
2141 Industrial Parkway, Suite 202
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904
Telephone: (301) 680-0148

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, D.C. 20013-1492
(800) 695-0285
E-Mail: nichcy@aed.org
Web Address: www.nichcy.org

Schwab Learning
1650 South Amphlett Boulevard, Suite 300
San Mateo, California 94402
Telephone: (650) 655-2410 or
(800) 230-0988
Web Address: www.schwablearning.org

Visit www.LDonline.org and www.aboutLD.org for more information about learning disabilities on the World Wide Web!

This is the first edition of *One Child at a Time. . . A Parent Handbook and Resource Directory for African American Families with Children Who Learn Differently*. Although the material presented at this time may not be as complete as desired, the urgency to disseminate information to African American families has become a priority. This publication will be updated and revised for future editions as frequently as necessary. In the meantime, the content has been verified to the best of NAEAACLD ability.

For more information, contact the NAEAACLD at P.O. Box 09521, Columbus, Ohio 43209. Telephone (614) 237-6021 or visit our Web site at http://www.aacld.org

June 2002

The condition of education in this nation has reached the point of failing the majority of today's children and future generations of children by ignoring what we know is best for them and settling for what is easiest for us. Now, only parents can make the difference . . . one child at a time.

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